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The Skipanon River is a branch of the Columbia River, that had its original source from Perkins Creek. It runs in a more or less northerly direction, through Warrenton and into the Columbia River. Most of the river runs through tide land that has been built up through the centuries from sediment from Youngs Bay and the Columbia River. At some places the banks are of sand; probably built up when the Ocean was in that area.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century white men made use of this river to bring passengers and freight to a place called Lexington. This place is now in the south end of Warrenton.

D. E. Pease homesteaded this area and built a hotel or inn near what was called Peas's landing. The early settlers along Clatsop Plains originated a boat line, that ran between Astoria and Lexington. Also in the early days there was a grocery and general merchandise store next to Peas's landing. This store around the beginning of the 20th century was known as Wirt's store. And as at that time the area was known as Warrenton. However just south of there, the area was known as Skipanon. There was a school located across the road from the present Northwest Wholesale Grocers warehouse called the Skipanon School.

Later about 1917 the school was abandoned and a new school was built a little north of the Grey Memorial Church on Clatsop plains called the Morrison school. This school was named after Billy Morrisons old homestead.

The river running through Warrenton divided the town into East and West Warrenton. The West side of the river was dyked by Daniel K. Warren and the east side was dyked by his brother Phinley C. Warren. These first dykes were not too substantial at first, especially on the east side. Muscrats were quite plentiful in those days and they liked to build their homes in the dykes. So between the muscrats and the extreem high tides, flooding was quite common in the early days. Later the City of Warrenton took over the dykes and kept them in better repair. Sometimes there would be some flooding due to driftwood getting caught in the tide gates and the water would back up, during high tide.

Daniel K. Warren in the 1890s built a hotel and dock below the railroad bridge on what used to be an island. At times river boats from Portland stopped there. Around the same time canning companies built net lofts on the east side of the river near the mouth.

Around the turn of the century two saw mills were built on the river. The D. L. Kelley mill about 200 yards above the lower bridge. Later operated as F. G. Kelley Lumber Co and Warrenton Lumber Co. when it burned down about 1924. Also the Old Oregon Mills sawmill located where the Warrenton Mooring basin is now located. It was closed down for some time, but during world war one it was leased by the Hammond Lumber Co. and after the war it was operated by the Warrenton Lumber Co. This mill was owned by the Smiley- Lampert Lumber Co. between the time of the Old Oregon Lumber Co. and when Hammond took it over.



Other mills built on the river were: The Prouty Lumber and Box Co, located near the mouth of the river, on the north side. George Schmidts alder mill, across the river east of the Kelly mill. Also the Youngs Bay Lumber Co. up river from Prouty's mill built in the 1920s. And lastly the Dant & Russell, Warrenton Lumber Co. mill built on the Prouty Lumber Co. mill site.

Prior to 1910 the loggers built a canal from Cullaby Lake, connecting it to the Skipanon River. This canal was for the purpose of logging Cullaby Lake area and also along the canal. As in those days a very large amount of the logs went to the mills by water.

About 1896 Pete Halferty built a clam cannery along the Skipanon river just above where the dam is now. Also at the dam site was the swimming hole. Next to there a gillnetter by the name of Dunsmore kept his barge, boats and net loft. He also made net floats there. Above Densmores place which was about a block above the present dam was a bridge. On the east side of the bridge Fred Preston had a slaughter house.

In 1903 my father Asvaldur Sigurdson bought the Halferty cannery and built his own cannery about 300 yards down river on the west side of the river. In 1915 a new cannery was built and part of the old cannery was used for a warehouse. About 1910 Harry Coniff built a clam cannery on the old Halferty site. And a few years later Al Foster and his father built a clam cannery just below the present dam on the west side of the river. Later this cannery was run by George Carter.

Around 1908 my Father bought a boat named the Teddy Roosevelt and ran it from the dock near his cannery to Astoria, Mc Gowan, Chinook, Ilwaco, Hammond and back to Warrenton on a daily run. He later sold the boat to my brother Alexander, who put it on the Olney Astoria run.

About 1914 my older brothers Sigurd, Fred, and Gunnar; also Warren Lester formed what was known as the Warrenton Navigation C. They also made the daily lower Columbia run from the Skipanon River. However due to so many logs in the river; especially up the river. they located their boarding location at Warrens Dock. The boat owned by the Warrenton Navigation Co. was named the "ROSE". They also had a number of barges, and with their wood contract with the mill, barged slab wood to a tannery in Astoria. During world war one the Rose was sold to the Hammond Lumber Co. where it was used for general purposes around the mill.

Until after World war one certain places in the Skipanon River was too shallow for boats at low tide. Also some spots were twenty feet deep at low tide. For many years when the boats were running above the bridges, John Bruce was bridge tender for the railroad bridge, and Jim or Dewey Neal was tender of the county bridge.



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One of the worst shallow places was at the mouth. There was a pole nailed on a stump with a flag on it to mark where the deepest place was at the entrance. On the east side of the entrance there was a spot of high ground, where originally was an Indian encampment. In the 1880s when Phinley Warren Bought the land on the east side of the river, he built his first home there. The place became an island at high tide until the dykes were built.

During the first war they started building a ship yard on the east side of the Skipanon, about a quarter of a mile below the present mooring basin. However the deal fell through after they had one of the ways about finished.

After the first world war great changes were made in the skipanon river below the railroad bridge. The city of Warrenton bonded itself for \$250,000.00, dredged the entire area from the railroad bridge to the Columbia River 30 feet deep. They moved the Warren hotel off the island, tore out Warrens dock and made that area into a turning basin. Then they built a dock on the south side of the turning basin. This dock was originally intended for loading lumber onto lumber schooners that traveled up and down the coast. For some time after the dock was built ships stopped there to load lumber that was taken over from the mills.

It was also necessary to build bulkheads along both banks of the river to hold the spoils or fill dirt that was pumped out of the channell. The U. S. Army Engineers let a contract to the Port of Astoria to do the dredging. The work was done by the dredge Natoma. The Port got the dredge from San Francisco. It sank in San Francisco before it was brought up. It had a fire before it started the Skipanon River job. It sank at the Port Dock while under repairs during the Skipanon River job. Later after that job was finished a boiler blew up and killed a fireman. I worked on the dredge during the Skipanon River job.

When the old Warren's dock was taken out, the old buildings that used to have the old post office, meat market and butcher shop were taken out. However they had not been in use for some time as such then.

George Schmidt had trouble with his alder mill because a lot of his alder logs floated under neath the boom sticks, because they floated so low. Then he built a saw mill on Cullaby Lake. However it did not run long.

George Warrens barn was two stories high. However when the area was filled in by the dredge it became one story. Also the Warrenton Clay Co. plant located where New England Fish Co. is at present set out in the tideland by itself. It was three stories high and operated about a year. The clay was barged in from the Lewis and Clark River near Fort Clatsop. Also clay was barged from across the river at Megler. They made clay building tile, drain tile Etc. A man by the name of Overpack promoted a local stock deal to finance it. The tile was of poor quality so it closed down.



Later the plant tried an unsuccessful attempt to make dry color. It was known as the Warrenton Dry Color Works. Also a local stock deal. The dredge filled in around the vacant building that was later torn down.

George Warren had a slaughter house on what is now the west bank of the turning basin, where the boat launching ramp is. It was torn down when the big fill was made. Jake Bosshart was the butcher.

Nearly all the kids learned to swim in the Skipanon River. The first swimming hole being where the dam is. Later the swimming hole was changed down stream about a third of a mile where the river was quite deep. At that place a spruce tree extended over the water for high diving.

Due to the drainage of so much swampy land, both along the river and around Cullaby Lake the water is quite brown. However at Perkins creek the water is quite clear, and supported trout. During the early part of the century the river had salmon, carp, suckers, bullheads, crawfish and at certain times the tom cod ran in the lower river.

I was once told by a piledriver man that the Skipanon River is the fastest flowing tidewater river in the lower Columbia River area.

After the lumber schooners quit using the City dock, the Warrenton Clam Co. rented a space on the west end and built a fish receiving station and butcher room. They then transported the salmon up the river where they were canned. Later the Haines Oyster Co. located a crab station on the dock. Also Quincy Robinson and Elmer Downing went into the crab business. Also Chas. Haglund. That used up all the west end of the dock.

On the east end of the dock Montague- O'Riley brought in an asphalt plant on a large barge and tied up to the dock. They lifted wagons onto the barge, loaded them and lifted them off for the horses to hitch up to them. In that way the first paved road was laid in Warrenton.

Joe and Al Anderson built a reduction plant between Prouty's mill and the Youngs Bay Lbr. Co. mill. The City had just formed a city manager form of government. About the first act was to sue the reduction plant to close down, due to the smell. The city lost the suit. However later Joe Anderson changed the plant into a crab processing station. Later he built a crab processing on the east end of the city dock. It later was taken over by the Crab Fishermen's Association. His old building is now a crab fishermens gear shed.



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Also around the early thirties a shingle mill was built at the east end of the City dock. The Warrenton Clam Co. Fish station to Johnson who made a clam cannery and crab processing plant out of it. The shingle mill was owned by Richard Roles & Chas. Bronson.

In the early thirties a stock company was formed and a salmon cannery was built at the west side of the turning basin. W. C. W. Wickline was one of the officers. Later it was operated by BurkePkg Co. And later sold to the Seaside Clam Co. who operated it mostly for processing and freezing crabs.

During the late 20s I presented the City of Warrenton a drawing, showing a cut that could be made through at about a quarter mile above the lower highway bridge. This would make an island and shorten the river from going around a big bend near Hills slough. A few years later there was a government project to enlarge all the dykes on both sides of the river. At the same time they made this cut, that can be seen up river from the highway bridge.

The San Juan Fishing and Packing Co. built a large filleting and freezing plant in the location where the Youngs Bay Lumber Co. plant was located. Miller made a deal with the Government during world war 2 and had the mill dismantled and set up at Medford to cut crating lumber. 2

Two shipyards were built on the river. The Salmi's Warrenton shipyard, located where the shingle mill had been. Also Hendrickson's shipyard located some distance above the San Juan plant. The San Juan plant later was taken over by New England Fish C.

The City of Warrenton built a nice mooring basin located where the old Warrenton Lumber Co. mill was located. The east end of the basin was at Hills slough, making it easier to dig out there.

Hendrickson built a restaurant just west of his ship yard. It was sold and later named the Skipanon Restaurant.

The U. S. Interior Department built a dam across the Skipanon River nearly a block down river from where the bridge went to Preston's slaughter house.

Palmberg set up a mixing plant on the east side of the river across from the Dant & Russell mill. And just up river from there the Port of Astoria used twenty acres or so to dump the spoils, from digging between the piers in Astoria.

The Warrenton High School has set up a fish hatchery along the river bank opposite the high school.

The Skipanon river has been used in the logging business almost continually since the time of the early settlers. Logging has been done since the beginning of the century by the Olson brothers, Warren and Lester, Peterson and Fry, John Olin, the Dawson Bros. Wm Hollenback, Jens Lerback, Earnest Dawson, and Ingvald Nygard.

Especially in the summer time the Skipanon harbor is crowded to full capacity, with all moorages taken. This is by both sport and commercial fish boats. At the mooring basin there is an office and place to clean sport salmon. Moorage floats are not only in the moorage basin, but also along the river banks Especially on the west side of the river.

It is nearly a sure thing that Brown and Root is going to build oil drilling platforms on the east side of the Skipanon River , at the junction of its mouth and You ngs Bay.

Eben Carruthers has purchased property along the west side of the turning basin. He is planing on an elaborate motel and restaurant complex. It will include where the old Johnson building and where the Seaside Clam Co. building used to stand. The population of Warrenton has increased considerable the last few years. So prospects of greater developments along the Skipanon river is in the offing.

The State highway department has been ordered by the U. S. Army Engineers to construct a new highway bridge across the river. At present plans are being studied.



## **Property Ownership West of the Skipanon River in Warrenton, Oregon**

**David Egbert Pease and his wife, Hannah Pegg Pease, settled on their donation land claim of 92.55 acres on the west bank of the Skipanon River in 1853 where they farmed, operated a hotel and kept a livery stable for those who wished to travel to Seaside.**

**Daniel Knight Warren and his wife, Sarah Eaton Warren, bought the Pease claim in 1870 along with acreage from the donation land claims of Jeremiah G. Tuller and F.W. Wallace, a total of 160 acres. They had Chinese laborers build 2 1/2 miles of dikes, reclaiming land along the edge of the Skipanon. Maps from 1890 show that the present northern part of the peninsula did not then exist. This land was built up from dredged fill about fifty years later. D.K. Warren died in 1903 and his wife, Sarah, in 1922.**

**The property ownership map from 1930 shows that the land was divided into two parcels,**

**1. the eastern part of the plat of the 2nd Extension of Warrenton which covers the area where the Warrenton Wood Products is now located (platted by D.K. Warren on March 20, 1891), and 2. property owned by Sara E. Warren (actually the estate of Sarah Warren), presently, the site of Pacific Coast Cannery, Port Warren Condominiums and the Skipanon Marina and Yacht Club.**

**A newspaper article from January 7, 1916, reports that the Warren estate donated fifteen acres along the Skipanon for the Warrenton Clay Products plant for the manufacture of dishes, hollow tile and sewer pipe. Organizers were George W. Warren, George Chew, E.P. Smiley, Warren Overpack and G.C. Barlow. A large brick building and kilns were erected and the company began operating in 1917, continuing for about a year before shutting down.**

**On February 21, 1921, a newspaper article reported that the Dailey Clay Products Company, organized on 1919, was beginning commercial operations, using the buildings of the Warrenton Clay Products. Directors were C.E. Ernest of Portland, H.G. Colton, George Broughton and B.F. Sinsheimer. This venture also failed about a year later.**

**The City of Warrenton came into ownership of the buildings and the kilns and probably also the land.**

**The old brick dry kilns were purchased by Prouty Lumber and Box Company from the City of Warrenton, and torn down in October 1929. The Prouty Company also put out bids for the tearing down of the brick building which the Columbia River Fishermen's Cooperative won. The brick was to be used to build a cold storage plant at the north side adjacent to the fishermen's cannery. Terry McGhan, manager of the Port Warren Condominiums, told me that he had dug down in the parking lot for New England Fish and discovered some evidence of the old clay plant.**

**Prouty Lumber and Box Company was organized by J.A. Prouty, A.N. Prouty and F.W. Prouty, Jr. in 1913 and operated a sawmill in Seaside. They also built a sawmill in Warrenton north of the clay plant in 1922 and operated it until 1953 when it was closed down and the buildings removed. (Although the Sanborn map of 1908 shows the Prouty mill, the date is not correct. New maps were added to the old books. Dates bear little relationship to what is shown in the books.)**

**In 1955, the Warrenton Lumber Company built a sawmill on the site of the Prouty mill. Organizers were Cecil Elliott, Ed Bellingham, Roy Gaillock, Lawrence Jepson, Harry Coon and Don Jensen. The next year Harry Coon sold his interest to his partners. About 1959 a share was sold to Dant and Russell and in 1964 they took over the rest of the shares. Dant and Russell bought eight acres on the Skipanon for \$17,500 from the county in January 1967. This was probably the filled area to the north. Two months later they built another mill. A fire destroyed the main mill in 1969 a year before major rebuilding was to take place and the mill was replaced. In 1982, Dant and Russell filed for bankruptcy. In January of 1984, Crown Zellerbach was negotiating to buy this property along the Skipanon.**

**Upriver from the Prouty mill, near the site of the clay plant, was the location of the Youngs Bay Lumber Company. Charles E. Miller built a sawmill on land he leased from the City of Warrenton. A newspaper from July 2, 1943 reported that Miller had built the sawmill from the ground up in 1930 and operated it practically without shut down through the depression. In 1943, he made an agreement with the U.S. government to move his operations to Roseburg. Much of the mill's equipment was moved there. The buildings were left. Terry McGhan said that he tore down the buildings of the sawmill so that he could clear the site to build the Port Warren Condominiums.**

**The Sanborn Insurance maps (labeled incorrectly in the original book with the date of 1908) show that to the south of the Prouty mill was the Marine Products Company which made fish oils and fertilizer. The Sanborn map of 1934 also shows the company little changed. The 1940 Sanborn map shows a name change of Pacific Marine Products with a large warehouse added for storage of fertilizer. The 1954 Sanborn map also shows the Pacific Marine Products Company, and to the south are shown for the buildings of**



the San Juan Packing Company. Clarence Sigurdson wrote in his article titled, "The Skipanon River," that Joe and Al Anderson built a reduction plant between Prouty's mill and the Youngs Bay Lumber Company mill. He said that when the city manager government formed, it was closed down and operated afterwards as a crab processing station. A newspaper from June 25, 1932 notes the incorporation of the Warrenton Fisheries Company of Warrenton. Those holding an interest were Joseph, Albert T. and Genevieve S. Anderson who intended to operate a fish cannery. Incorporation papers at the Astoria Public Library show that the incorporators of the Marine Products Company were Joseph W. Anderson, E.F. Anderson and J.J. Funsten. The 1974 Metsker property ownership map shows that land in this area was owned by Norm C. Vielmette. Incorporation papers at the Astoria Public Library list the incorporators of the Warrenton Crab Company as Joe A. Nichols, Wally A. Leback, Cecil M. Green, Norman C. Vielmette and Andrew Olson. The chain of ownership, from Anderson to Vielmette (apparently) is not clear.

② Sigurdson also wrote that the San Juan Fishing and Packing Company built a large filleting and freezing plant in the location where the Youngs Bay Lumber company plant was located. This was on fifteen acres the mill had leased. San Juan also bought the Youngs Bay Company buildings and they took a lease with an option to buy the land from the City of Warrenton. They announced plans to build in March 1944 with Max Berg as local manager. They operated until 1969 when they sold out to New England Fish. They in turn sold out to Ron Miller. He sold out to Warrenton Deep Sea Incorporated. The link between the last company named and Pacific Seafoods, which changed its name to Pacific Coast Seafoods, is not shown in the papers given here and is unclear to me. Pacific Coast Seafoods is still in operation.

① Sigurdson also wrote that Hendrickson had a shipyard some distance above the San Juan plant and that he had built a restaurant just west of his ship yard that was sold and renamed the Skipanon Restaurant. The incorporation papers show E.W., Eldred W. and Elna Hendrickson formed a company. And in December of 1946, they bought property from the City of Warrenton. Two marine ways and two boat repair shops and a marina were built in 1946. The accompanying Bargain and Sale Deed affirms that this property is adjacent to that of the San Juan Fishing and Packing Company's property. The Hendricksons sold this property to Skipanon Corporation.

③ Skipanon Corporation, owned by Al Oakley, ran a restaurant and the old marina for a time, then sold it to Skipanon Investments Oregon Limited in 1978. This company was formed by Keith Cook, Bill Weller and silent partner, Larry Schrieber. Cook moved the restaurant closer to the Skipanon and authorized Meeco Marinas, Incorporated, to build 121 floats. After Skipanon Investments Oregon Limited failed to get a license to dispense hard liquor and was unable to pay its bills, various companies tried to foreclose on it, including Meeco Marinas who demanded seventy of the docks they had built. Skipanon Corporation and Al Oakley tried to

**get the business back. Their interest was later bought by Jim Dykes who took a one-year lease with an option to buy and began running Captain Jim's Skipanon Restaurant and Charter Service. The restaurant is open today and many boats are tied up at the moorage. The business is now known as the Skipanon Marina and Yacht Club.**

**The Skipanon Investments Oregon Limited Company also built the Port Warren Condominiums and thirty-three adjacent moorages. Ownership of these units also became part of a prolonged court battle.**

**Note:**

**The aerial photographs of the sawmill are believed to have been taken sometime between the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The cars that can be seen in the photographs were dated by Clatsop County Historical Society curator, Jeff Smith, to this time. The sawmills shown are the Prouty mill in the background and the Youngs Bay sawmill in the foreground.**